



Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Division of Epidemiology and Immunization

To: Massachusetts Health Care Providers
From: Susan M. Lett, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Immunization Program
Date: October 2008

Re: Reduced Availability of State-Supplied Vaccines for Adults

As part of the Commonwealth's response to the state's economic situation, the state vaccine account was reduced by \$6 million. As a result of this cut, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) will no longer be able to provide most vaccines previously provided for adults.

In order to address the reductions in our budget and mitigate the harm caused to providers and patients, MDPH will be cutting staff across the department and reducing the services provided in our own facilities like our public health hospitals. However, internal staffing and program reductions are insufficient to deal with the magnitude of the fiscal problems that we now confront and MDPH is also forced to reduce state funding for vaccines.

We have tried to preserve essential core public health programs and maintain, to the greatest extent possible, the services for the most vulnerable residents in the Commonwealth. So, to minimize the impact of reduced funding, we will try to preserve vaccine availability to those sites seeing adult patients at highest risk and for whom billing for vaccines is not an option -- to the extent our resources and budget allow.

1. Private Provider Sites*

Unfortunately, MDPH will no longer be able to supply any vaccines for adults being seen in private provider sites or settings with the exception of Td vaccine (see below).

2. Public Provider Sites*

Unfortunately, MDPH will only be able to provide reduced quantities of the following vaccines for Massachusetts adults 19 years of age and older who are seen in public settings:

- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV23)
- Measles, mumps, rubella vaccine (MMR)
- Varicella vaccine

We will make as many doses of vaccine available as our current inventory and budget permit, but, many providers should expect their orders to be reduced. Available MDPH-supplied vaccine will be **prioritized** to boards of health and homeless shelters. MDPH vaccine unit staff will review all orders and make reductions based on site-type, vaccine requested and historical usage.

MDPH is asking public providers to:

- **prioritize** MDPH-provided vaccines for those patients at highest risk and who are without any health insurance. In order to further maximize the state's remaining inventory,
- **purchase** and **bill** for as many doses of vaccines for adults as possible.

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The Department is notifying health plans and insurers in Massachusetts about this action and asking them to **reimburse** providers for all vaccines recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) at the amount paid by the practice, as well as the administration fee. Commissioner Auerbach and senior staff at MDPH will be meeting with third party payors to ask their assistance in assuring reimbursement at this most difficult time.

Exceptions to this action in both private and public provider sites:

- State-supplied influenza vaccine, which is already allocated for the 2008 – 2009 influenza season.
- State-supplied tetanus-diphtheria vaccine (Td), which is manufactured by the Massachusetts Biologic Laboratories, and will continue to be provided in both private and public settings.

Enclosed you will find a revised version of MDPH's *Adult Vaccine Availability Table* which provides more guidance on vaccines available by provider type and defines which sites are identified as 'public sector'. At the current time, there are no changes in the availability of state-supplied pediatric and adolescent vaccines.

We recognize the challenges this action presents for you and your patients. We appreciate your commitment to your patients and will continue to work with you to mitigate the impact of the current economic situation. If you have any questions regarding vaccine availability, please contact the Vaccine Management Unit at 617-983-6828.

* Sites affected by this action include: local health departments; community health centers; Visiting Nurse Associations (VNAs); long-term care facilities; assisted living facilities; home health agencies; STD clinics, integrated counseling, testing and referral sites; correctional facilities; private and public hospitals; and other private and public providers who have received state-supplied vaccines.